

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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REPORT OF NCC RURAL PASTORS' CONFERENCE

From July 7th to July 13th the International Christian University was host to a Rural Pastors' Conference, sponsored by the Rural Committee of the National Christian Council. In these pleasant and relatively cool surroundings gathered some 85 ministers and laymen, mostly from the Kanto and Kansai districts but with a sprinkling of representatives of districts from Hokkaido to Kyushu. This was the second such regional conference this year, the first having been held in Hokkaido in May.

The programme of the conference was a very intensive one, both in content and application. For example, a great deal of time was spent in the seminar groups and it may well be that the most effective results of the conference will come out of these periods. In the discussions that members worked through together such a wide range of subjects as the church and its integration in the community, personal adjustments in rural society, problems of production and economics, religious education, folk religious in Japan, methods of evangelism and many others. In the give and take of the discussions between men with detailed rural experience, outlines of action for the future were hammered out.

The new emphasis in the conference was one not too often found heretofore in such gatherings, namely, the necessity of a sound sociological knowledge of the rural areas in the task of evangelism. To drive home the point were expert lecturers who covered the whole field of rural sociology. The mornings were largely given over to these lectures which provided the factual material for the seminars. The later occupied the afternoons

and two evenings. A lighter, though pertinent, note was introduced on two evenings in the form of slides by Mr. Seiichi Fujisaki and Dr. Clark, illustrating rural life and developments in Europe, South America and the United States.

A very encouraging aspect of the conference was the evident earnestness and flexibility of the representative ministers and laymen in their approach to the problems. There was a clear realization on the part of all that many former evangelistic methods are inadequate to present conditions and that the Church's duty is to enter more fully into every aspect of rural life. The whole orientation was in terms of a new attitude towards and approach to rural evangelism in tune with the times. This feeling coloured all the lectures and discussion groups.

In terms of new vision and an increased sense of unanimity in the work of rural evangelism the conference was highly successful. It would seem that the next step is to convey to the wider Church from which the representatives came something of this vision and understanding that is may become the basis for a new rural strategy effective throughout the Christian movement in Japan.

KYODAN'S MISSIONS CENTENNIAL EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

The Missions Centennial Evangelism Committee of the Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan) met in the Tamozawa Inn at Nikko for a full dress conference on July 12 - 14. Despite very hot weather there was a fine attendance, with representatives of the Kyoku committees coming from all over Japan.

The business of the meeting was to assess the program to date, reexamine the general pattern of the movement, and to plan for the '56 campaign. A good share of the time was given to devotional services and prayer. The way in which free prayer time was filled without pause gave an indication of the growing interest in the centennial program.

Reports of centennial evangelism as carried on in the year past, presented by representatives of each kyoku, filled most of the first two sessions. There were many interesting, often thrilling items: the Takamatsu saturation evangelism, where with much preparation and a locally raised ¥300,000 budget the resident Christians are trying to reach everyone in the city during a three day campaign of meetings, visiting, and distributed literature, followed by four days of visiting those showing interest to conserve results. Another kyoku reported a "10 weeks campaign" involving ten weekly visits to interested people, three days of evangelistic meetings, then ten more weekly follow up visits. There were reports of caravans of young people holding meetings in unchurched areas, and of missionary-pastor teams doing itinerating evangelism together. Time did not begin to suffice to tell of what had been done. All could feel that the campaign was really getting under way and promised to keep growing as we move toward the climax year.

Problems of raising needed funds were discussed with realistic candor, but also with confidence. Lines of main endeavor were highlighted, but the need for varying methods in differing situations was clearly recognized.

Plans for the next year's campaign were thoroughly discussed and criticised in the light of experience. They will emphasize some of the tested patterns of the past year and be circulated to groups now well organized and with experience behind them.

The prayer session at the close of the conference voiced the consciousness of dependence on God for real results, but indicated a refreshed enthusiasm, and a renewed dedication to this centennial evangelism campaign.

DR. SHEPHERD IN JAPAN - liturgy and the Seikokai

Thirty priests from all over Japan have gathered at the Central Theological College from the 13th to the 29th of this month. They are participating in the annual refresher course of the Seikokai (Japan Episcopal Church). One of the main lecturers for this course is Dr. M. H. Shepherd, Professor of Liturgy at the Christian Divinity School of the Pacific.

Dr. Shepherd comes at a most opportune time because the Seikokai is in the process of revising its Prayer Book. A revision of the Book of Common Prayer was accepted by the General Synod in 1953 for "permissive use" until the next meeting in 1956. During that time there has been extensive discussion. There is some concern lest the revisions proposed make the services so different as to take the Japanese Anglican service too far away from the main current of Anglican worship.

The Revision Committee will have chances to meet with Dr. Shepherd during his stay in Japan and benefit from his wide knowledge and experience in matters of the litany.

BAPTIST CONVENTION - problems and answers

On July 26-29 some two hundred members of the Japan Baptist Convention (connected with the Southern Baptist Church in USA) will meet at Amagi Sanso. Three of the most important problems which they will discuss are outlined below.

1. Although the number of churches in the Japan Baptist Convention has increased remarkably, there has not been a comparable increase in membership. As compared to the 13 churches ten years ago, there are now 60 churches and 57 evangelistic points. However, as compared to the more than 7,000 members two years ago, there are now only slightly more than 8,000. Thus, in the process

of building new churches, the membership has been spread out quite thinly. The problem now is how to get a comparable increase of members in these many new churches.

2. As in the case of many other churches, the churches in the Baptist Convention are for the most part not financially independent. Only thirty of the sixty churches do not receive outside financial assistance, and of course the evangelistic points must be heavily subsidized. In an effort to make at least some of the national organization financially independent, it is being suggested that during the coming year the Department of Evangelism be supported entirely by indigenous money and that other departments gradually follow suit.

3. Most of the evangelistic efforts of the Baptist Convention have been concentrated in cities and suburbs. Here there has been a lack of coordination between the evangelistic efforts of the missionaries and that of the Japanese ministers. During this annual meeting there will be a discussion of ways to bring about a closer coordination of these evangelistic efforts for the good of the total evangelistic effort of the Convention.

Y.W.C.A. CONFERENCES

Under the auspices of the National Y.W.C.A. two nation-wide conferences will be held this summer. The first conference convenes July 25-29 at the Hokuriku Gakuin, Kanazawa. This conference is for girl students of middle school and high school age. Students of these schools are so busy with preparation for entrance examinations into higher schools and so concerned about the problem of securing work after graduation that they have little leisure for cultural and spiritual development. The present time in Japan is a time much confusion and frustration. Young people are confronted by many problems, both economic and moral. Under the general theme of "Looking to Jesus", the conference hopes to discuss these problems and through fellowship and prayer afford guidance and encouragement to the middle and high school girls. Also to be discussed will be how Y.W.C.A. members can contribute to the welfare of the schools.

The other conference will be held at Tozanso, Gotemba, August 27-31. This is also a national conference. Participants in this conference will be girl students from the colleges of Japan. The general theme will be "Living in Christ". The chaplain will be Rev. Shinnosuke Miyamoto, pastor of the Kokubunji Church, Tokyo.

NEXT ISSUES OF JCAN - delay and a rest

Due to the schedule of conferences during the summer months, the next issue of the Japan Christian Activity News will be issued on August 5th instead of the 1st. The mid-August issue will be omitted.

